DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS OF THE LEBANON

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THE Lebanese Republic covers an area of about 10,000 sq. k.† The population was last counted in the Order of the President dated June 17, 1943, as the number of citizens registered in the registration records on December 31, 1942. This Order also referred to a number of Lebanese who had emigrated but had retained their Lebanese citizenship.

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The Order in question was published in connexion with the elections to the Lebanese Parliament. Although the Maronite communities disagreed with the correctness of the number given, the Order remains the official document pending the holding of a general Census which will determine the figures more precisely.

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The following is the table which served as the foundation for fixing the population of the Lebanon as on January 1, 1943:‡

Communities.	Inhabitants.	Emigrants.	Total.
Maronites	318,200	91,276	409,476
Sunni	205,000	4,953	209,953
Shi'ah	200,000	2,000	202,000
Greek Orthodox	166,658	33,000	199,658
Druses	71,711	4,000	75,711
Greek Catholics	67,996	5,000	72,996
Armenian Orthodox (Gregorians)	58,000	4,000	62,000
Minorities	41,836	2,178	44,014
Total	1,089,401	146,407	1,235,808

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The following are the estimated figures for the movement of population in the Lebanon, and the estimated natural increase:‡

Communities.	1932 Census.	End 1943.	Difference.	Percentage.
Sunni	179,887	205,000	25,113	14·1
Shi'ah	159,153	200,000	40,847	25·5
Druses	68,797	71,711	2,914	4·0
Maronites	284,600	318,200	33,600	11·8
Greek Catholics	55,045	61,996	6,951	12·5
Greek Orthodox	90,887	166,658	13,771	13·0

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The instructive conclusions which can be drawn from these tables are:

(a) Most of the emigrants from the Lebanon and those who continue

* Since the demarcation of the Syro-Lebanese Frontier has not been completed, estimates of the area of the two States vary. The area of the Autonomous Sanjak of the Lebanon (1861-1915) was 3,200 kilometres and its population was 400,000.

† "La Syrie et l'Orient," Beirut, 20-25, 6, 1945.

‡ Ibid. The figures in these tables and the statistical calculations should be compared with extreme caution on account of the backward methods used for demographical statistics in the Lebanon.

to maintain their Lebanese citizenship abroad are Christians, the overwhelming majority of whom are Maronites.

(f) The natural increase among the non-Christian population of the Lebanon, and particularly of the Shi'ah and the Druze, is more than twice as great as that of the Christian population. These facts are noted as a key to explain various developments, the influence of which may be decisive in shaping the social character and political fate of the Lebanon.

Any person observing the demographic problems of the Lebanon cannot but observe a number of factors common to the Christian population of the Lebanon and the Yishuv (the Jewish community) in Palestine. The natural increase of the Christians in the Lebanon is roughly equal to that of the Yishuv in Palestine.*

Against this, however, the Yishuv in Palestine has incomparably more potential assets in the way of immigration from abroad than that which is available to the Lebanese Christians through the source of emigrants. And just as the chief concern of Zionism in Palestine is the creation of possibilities for the absorption of Arab immigrants from abroad, so the Christians of the Lebanon are faced first and foremost with the problem of preventing emigration from the country, and, in consequence, the creation of opportunities for absorbing emigrants who do return and who can return to their homeland, given suitable absorption conditions. In addition, attention is devoted to the creation of opportunities for absorbing Christians who require a refuge.

The absence of dynamic economic resources in the Lebanon which could increase and expand the sources of livelihood for a progressive population has led to a steady emigration from the country since the middle of the last century. This process has chiefly affected the Christians whose requirements are more developed and whose living standards are higher than those of their Druze and Moslem neighbours; it has created a serious social and political problem which, when together with their lower rate of natural increase, places the future of the Lebanese Christians in permanent danger.

Robert Widmer described the economic reasons for a migration from the Lebanon in the following passage:†

> "Lebanon is overpopulated. As has been stated, the density of population is about 93 people to a square kilometre. In view of the topography of the country, its rocky mountains and its thin soil, its scarcity of mineral wealth, and its undeveloped industries, the land cannot support all its people. Consequently it is to be expected that some of them have to emigrate, leaving many dependents on their remittances."

As long as emigration was temporary, it was in many ways advantageous. To the general broadening of outlook resulting from contact with more advanced countries were added the material benefits of an influx of money to the country's capital (brought in by returning emigrants), as well

* Previous generations among the Christians of the Lebanon as against fifteen generations among the Jews of Palestine.

† L. Hirschfeld, *Economic Organization of Syria*, Beirut, 1936, p. 19.

for the surplus population, which kept up the standard of living at home, and, most important, the inflow of a considerable volume of remittances in cash. For instance, remittances from abroad were estimated at 45 million Palestine pounds, as compared with a total commodity export of 4 million Palestine pounds.*

Although there has been an increasing stream of emigrants returning home alongside the stream of emigration from the Lebanon, the percentage of emigrants recorded than of persons returning during all the years before the war ranges 1932 to 1933, the period of the economic crisis in America, when the number of emigrants declined and the number of persons returning increased. In 1928, for example, prior to the crisis in America, 14,488 persons emigrated from Syria and the Lebanon and 4,403 returned. In 1932, during the American crisis, 2,406 emigrated and 3,138 returned. In 1933 the emigrants increased again to 6,304, while those returning declined to 1,922.†

According to Wichser, those emigrated from Syria and the Lebanon between 1860 and 1900, and 100,000 persons between 1900 and 1914. According to the annual reports of the French Government to the League of Nations, 50,000 people emigrated from Syria and the Lebanon between 1919 and 1938; about half of these came from the Lebanon. In absolute figures, according to these sources, then, the total emigration from Syria and the Lebanon between 1860 and 1938 (excluding the period 1914 to 1918) amounted to 400,000.

E. Thomas has dealt extensively with the problem of emigration from the Lebanon.‡ He is one of the important investigators of this subject and an expert on the demography of Syria and the Lebanon.

Emigration from the Lebanon began before 1860, largely for political reasons connected with the persecution of the Christians by the Turks and the unsatisfactory state of security in the country. The increasing stream of emigration during the period of autonomy in the Lebanon declined chiefly from economic sources, as the resources in the country became too restricted for the increase in population under stable political and social conditions.

The first stream of emigration turned to Egypt, where the Lebanese who had been educated in French schools found various opportunities of establishing themselves in Government offices and private institutions, as merchants, journalists, etc. Many of the emigrants established themselves firmly in Egyptian life, and their participation in the cultural field was particularly noticeable. During the '80's and '90's of the last century a steady stream of emigration of Lebanese began to North and South America, and to Western Africa, whilst some went to Australia. In the course of time important centers of Lebanese emigration were established in the Argentine, Uruguay and Brazil. In the U.S. the chief centers are New York and Chicago.§

* W. B. Fisk, "The Lebanon," *Congregational Review*, New York, April, 1920.
† J. Hanauer, *Economic Organization of Syria*, Beirut, 1938, p. 20.
‡ E. Thomas, *Géographie Historique de la Syrie Centrale*, Paris, 1938.
§ After the first World War there was an increase in the number of Lebanese in Detroit, here they were employed in the Ford Works.

Thoumin, like other investigators, finds it hard to give exact figures of emigration from Syria and the Lebanon, and therefore chooses to give his estimates in percentages by countries, as follows:

United States and Canada	35 per cent.
South America	35 " "
Egypt	20 " "
Other countries	10 " "

The emigrants who left Syria and the Lebanon between 1920 and 1930 settled as follows:

South America	50 per cent.
Africa (including Egypt) ...	15 " "
Egypt	10 " "
North America	10 " "
Other countries	15 " "

If the figures given by Wilcox and the Reports to the League of Nations quoted above are adopted as the statistical basis of Thoumin, it follows that about 1,600,000 Syrians and Lebanese are living in North America, about the same number in South America, and about 400,000 in Egypt. The remaining figures are distributed in the other parts of the world.

Although the students mentioned above have never dealt with the question of Lebanese immigration with the necessary completeness, but merely regarded it, particularly after the first world war, as part of the general emigration from the area of the French Mandate, nevertheless both Wilcox and Thoumin stressed the fact that the Lebanon was and has remained the chief source of emigration, for the reasons explained by them, particularly by Thoumin. Dr. A. Ruppin* deals explicitly with the distribution of emigration from Syria and the Lebanon by countries and communities. Basing himself on official figures, Ruppin reaches the conclusion that up to 1925, 130,000 people had emigrated from the Autonomous Sanjak of the Lebanon.

What has been said above makes it possible to conclude with considerable certainty that the majority of the emigrants from Syria and the Lebanon during the period of emigration came from the area which is now included within the boundaries of the Lebanese Republic.

Professor M. Jerusalem† estimates the total number of emigrants from the Lebanon at 180,000, and reckons that 150,000 to 160,000 were Maronites.

The influence of the emigration from the Lebanon on the population 167
can be learnt from Thoumin, who points out that at least a third of the 459
inhabitants of every Lebanese village have travelled abroad. In his journeys through the Lebanon the author found that in every Christian family he met, at least one member had emigrated during the preceding twenty years. The Lebanese who returned to their home lands are a

* Dr. A. Ruppin, Syrien als Wirtschaftsgebiet, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1920, p. 20.
† M. Jerusalem, The Maronites, Jerusalem, 1920, p. 60 [illegible]

problem on their own, but the paucity of reliable material on the Lebanese Diaspora makes it hard to investigate the subject. Yet the large number of Lebanese emigrants who continue to preserve their citizenship shows not only their affection for their homeland but also suggests their intention of returning there under suitable conditions.

Despite the constant emigration from the Lebanon, this country served as a refuge during the interval between the two wars for Christian emigrants from the neighbouring countries, and in particular for Armenians.* More than 60,000 Armenian refugees from Turkey found refuge in the Lebanon, and despite the economic problems which were raised by the entry of these penniless immigrants, they have added considerably to the Christian strength of the Lebanon, where their fellow-Christians, together with the Mandatory Power, have provided for them in various ways and have facilitated their establishment in the country.

The statistical data on the changes in the composition of the population resulting from its differing natural composition shows clearly the danger awaiting the Christian character of the country. The danger of a Moslem majority, to be sure, primarily affects not Mount Lebanon proper, but the State of Lebanon within its existent political frontiers, where the Moslem populations constitute a majority in the towns of Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre and Sidon. But the natural increase of the Druzes and Shi'ah in Mount Lebanon, which is twice, or more, as much as that of the Christians, also raises a serious problem for the latter, even in their chief stronghold. Any free-will relinquishment by the Christians of the present boundaries of the Lebanese Republic, and their return to the boundaries of their period of autonomy between 1861 and 1915, would not serve to solve the main problem of preserving the Christian character of their country for any length of time.

This situation faces the Lebanese Christians with a number of grave and urgent problems which require solution in the economic field: the creation of conditions that will first and foremost prevent emigration, which chiefly affects the Christian population and systematically reduces their numbers in the country; and, in addition, the development of possibilities for absorbing returning emigrants and Christian immigrants from the neighbouring countries. In any case of organized population transfer in this part of the world for the sake of territorial concentration in accordance with common religious and communal character, the Lebanon would be more suitable than any other Middle Eastern region for serving as a centre for the Christians.

* Most of these are Orthodox (Gregorians). The Catholics and Protestants among them are included under "minorities" in the tables given above.

(For bibliographical references see complete text.)